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Crime prevention and criminal justice

African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 58/139 of 22 December 2003 and contains proposals to strengthen the programmes and activities of the African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders. It focuses on the major activities of the Institute: (a) general direction and management; (b) research and policy development; (c) training and human resource development; (d) information and documentation; (e) advisory services to Governments; and (f) international cooperation and joint activities. The report also covers initiatives aimed at ensuring more stable and sustainable funding for the Institute and activities aimed at making its member States aware of the need to adhere to existing international crime prevention and criminal justice instruments.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 58/139 of 22 December 2003. It focuses on the activities, operations and funding of the African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders and includes the Institute's activities to raise awareness and promote adherence of member States to relevant international conventions, following an assessment of individual countries' needs and incorporation of appropriate measures into national action plans for crime prevention and criminal justice.

2. The rampant spread of crime across national borders and its increasingly sophisticated nature are making enhanced cooperation between States and their law enforcement agencies, under various international and regional initiatives, more essential now than ever before. Crime constitutes a major preoccupation of Governments, as it poses serious threats not only to the security and sovereignty of States but also to the quality of life through disruption of and wanton interference in the sustainable provision of social services, the emergence of institutions of good governance and the promotion of democracy and a culture of the rule of law. Effective law enforcement and the equitable administration of criminal justice are generally compromised owing to lack of capacity of institutions and their vulnerability to manipulation by criminal elements. Africa is suffering from the growing problem of crime, including criminal activities related to transnational organized crime. The ongoing efforts of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in particular through its global programmes against trafficking in human beings and corruption and in relation to the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (General Assembly resolution 55/25, annex I), as well as other multilateral agreements and arrangements, have contributed to the establishment of legal frameworks for the maintenance of the rule of law, a prerequisite for stability and development.

3. The general consensus that has been generated in the combat against crime, including terrorism, has created an international pattern of networks working together to prevent crime. The emergence of a culture of the rule of law and the application and adoption of common strategies in the development of capacity-building for law enforcement and judicial cooperation among nations is a necessary prerequisite in the search to establish new and to consolidate existing partnerships premised on regional cooperation in pursuit of sustained remedial action against transnational organized crime.

4. The problem of crime in Africa is complicated by several characteristics unique to the region, including high levels of illiteracy, civil conflicts, natural disasters, poverty, poor communication links, lack of social infrastructure, traditional attitudes and activities, including gender bias, weak civil and public sectors vulnerable to corruption, poor and archaic legislation and low levels of technological operation. The consequence of all this is an inadequate ability to detect, investigate and prosecute crime, a poor standard of correctional capacity and facilities for offenders, including juveniles, and finally the emergence of criminal groups. The incidence of crime in Africa is further complicated by the fact that Africa is a vast virgin area open to the activities of organized criminal groups. Africa is affected in many ways by organized crime: it is both a region where

transnational organized crime operates and a source of organized criminal groups, as well as a victim of transnational organized crime.

5. The phenomenon of global cooperation and the parallel development of tele-technology has brought with it challenges created by the opportunistic permeation of criminal activity and its exploitation of the global systems themselves. The limits of the reach of criminal gangs are no longer even transnational: their activities transcend continents and civilizations and their operations are growing more subtle and sophisticated. In view of the ever-increasing incidence of cross-border criminal activity, improved collaboration in crime prevention and criminal justice is urgently needed at the regional and subregional levels. Regional cooperation has become an effective tool of problem-solving and has taken precedence over all other initiatives in that respect. The African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, as a member of the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme network in the Africa region, can become a tool for addressing the specific crime prevention and criminal justice needs of the region and for promoting effective and active cooperation between African Governments in that respect.

6. During the period under review, the Institute continued to receive political support from its member States, its Governing Board, the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, the Economic Commission for Africa, the African Union, the General Assembly and other interested parties, including the private and civil sectors. The support and assistance received, including partnerships with donor Governments and agencies, have enabled the Institute to implement and participate in a number of crucial activities. The Institute continues its efforts to consolidate cooperation with member States in order to develop joint programmes of action based on individual national requirements in the area of crime prevention, using the international legal instruments as an effective means to address the crime problem.

7. The Institute continued to operate against a background of financial difficulties arising from the lack of effective response to their financial obligations by member States. However, the growing awareness of the activities of the Institute among member States and other interested parties has improved perceptions of the Institute, which has in turn been reflected in the improved level of response to the Institute's call to countries to join in the implementation of programmes of mutual concern in the area of crime prevention. It is hoped that the strategy of engaging the Institute's constituents individually in specific programmes and activities will ultimately translate into financial support and boost the capacity of the Institute to provide the mandated services.

II. Programme activities

A. Governing Board

8. The ninth session of the Governing Board of the Institute was held in Kampala on 21 and 22 June 2004. The Board expressed its appreciation to the General Assembly for its continued support to the Institute, in particular for the United Nations grant, which is vital for sustaining the Institute. The Board expressed satisfaction with the Institute's proposals for a sustained drive to gain crucial

support from member States and others concerned and called for enhanced cooperation between member States and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in that respect.

9. The Governing Board urged member States to meet their financial responsibility to the Institute and called on those countries which had not yet acceded to the statute of the Institute to become members. The Board advised the Institute to explore means of mobilizing further support for its programmes from non-traditional sources.

B. General direction and management

10. The programme of activities aimed at improving further the current perception of the Institute by member States and other concerned parties continued during the period under review. Proposals for joint execution of bilateral projects with such parties were processed and implemented. The Institute also worked to develop its network of partnerships in the region and provided advisory services on emerging international crime-related issues and in support of law enforcement systems, which are often inadequate to cope with the current levels and sophistication of crime.

11. On the initiative of the Governing Board, substantial efforts have been made to visit various capitals and approach African delegations to regional and international meetings in order to mobilize resources and also to assess the needs of the countries concerned as regards promotion of stable and viable criminal justice systems and enhancing their ability to combat the growing threat of transnational organized crime through strengthened regional cooperation. This growing concern has been internalized in the operational structure of the Institute and in that respect contacts with the African and other diplomatic missions in Kampala and Addis Ababa have been enhanced through visits for coordination, cooperation and consultation purposes with a view to enhancing prospects for strengthened support.

12. As a result of this move, the Institute has received, inter alia, a delegation from Zambia, headed by the Commissioner of the Zambian Prisons Service, Jethro K. Mumbuwa, on 20 March 2003; the High Commissioner of India on 18 November 2003; a delegation from Lesotho, headed by Justice Monapathi, of the High Court of Lesotho, on 25 May 2004; and most recently a delegation from the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda on 2 July 2004. The feasibility of joint activities in the areas such as prisons and community service was discussed with the institutions and countries represented.

13. The task of developing capacity and improving the ability of the Institute to offer the required services to its member States has been highlighted as a major means of reaching out to interested partners. A staff competence analysis exercise has been launched and is expected to upgrade the skills of staff as the Institute responds to requests for services from its members and improves its image as a source of expertise, in particular in the area of new crime trends. The unique and constantly changing environment in the region, torn between civil anarchy and outright criminal vandalism, has made it necessary to develop tailor-made and pragmatic crime prevention and criminal justice programmes in accordance with the emerging needs of various sectors in the region. Currently the Institute has project proposals awaiting funding on a variety of themes, including terrorism, trafficking

in women and children and combating and eliminating kidnapping. The project proposals were developed as a result of a study undertaken by the Institute to assess the needs of its member States in crime prevention.

14. The Government of Uganda continued to offer valuable assistance, guidance and political support to the Institute, as also to honour its commitment to provide facilities in accordance with the host agreement. The Institute has benefited considerably from the continued political and material support provided by the host Government.

C. Crime prevention and criminal justice activities

15. The main focus of the activities of the Institute has been on the individual needs of member States and the growing awareness that new trends in crime are elusive, making effective crime prevention strategies essential as a necessary planning component in the process of sustainable socio-economic development. Within its available means, the Institute has reached out to member States by conducting advisory missions with a view to identifying, studying and developing appropriate remedial action to address the crime problem. Such missions were organized to Bamako in April 2003; to Ouagadougou in April 2003; to Cairo in August 2003; to Addis Ababa in August 2003; to Abuja in August 2003; and to Dar es Salaam in May 2004. Subsequently, workshops were organized in Burkina Faso and Mali in the period following the advisory missions in order to train trainers in areas of concern for each country in relation to the prevalence of transnational criminality and the need for concerted action at the regional and subregional levels, using the United Nations conventions and their protocols as effective means to combat crime. It is anticipated that such national workshops will eventually lead to the holding of subregional and regional workshops aimed at encouraging adherence to and implementation of the international instruments in the African region, in particular the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto as well as the United Nations Convention against Corruption (General Assembly resolution 58/4, annex).

1. Extradition and mutual legal assistance conventions

16. The Institute has continued to pursue its efforts to complete the final and crucial stages of the extradition and mutual legal assistance projects, supported by the United States Government through its Departments of State and Justice. Efforts are under way to arrange an expert/ministerial meeting to discuss the draft conventions on extradition and mutual legal assistance for subsequent consideration by the Council of Ministers and Summit of African Leaders of the African Union. The Institute is at decisive stages of discussion with the relevant authorities of the Union regarding the final approval of the two regional instruments.

2. Trafficking in firearms and ammunition in Africa

17. This project has also been implemented jointly by the Institute with the support of the United States Government through its Departments of State and Justice. The need for a firearms control centre in the African region was emphasized in the preliminary recommendations made by experts and delegates of member

States at workshops as a viable means to coordinate regional efforts to combat the growing problem of arms proliferation and the attendant risk of instability. The proposal for the development of the firearms control centre is now ready for discussion with prospective donors and interested partners, including civil society, the public sector and multilateral agencies.

18. The Institute has also continued to participate in the regional and international discussions regarding viable solutions to the escalating problem of firearms. However, the lawlessness that is spreading in the region has had a very negative impact on the search for a lasting solution with respect to establishing a reliable mechanism to restore the rule of law and security. However, efforts are being made in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Economic Community of West African States to promote ratification of the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (General Assembly resolution 55/255 (annex)).

D. Other activities

1. Effective cooperation between the African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders and its partners

19. Since the Institute launched its study to identify a sustainable flow of resources to support and boost its capacity to implement programmes of mutual concern with its partners, a number of contacts have been formalized with the academic, civil, private and human rights organizations. The Institute implementing the recommendations made by various entities concerning the creation of a database for national and local focal points, which will benefit from maintaining a constant dialogue, while the Institute can make use of the relevant information in the database. A number of countries and organizations have called for an increased flow of information and services from the Institute to their capitals and the development of partnerships at the local and regional levels will significantly address that request. The report of the study is in press.

2. United Nations survey on kidnapping

20. As part of the United Nations study on the effects of kidnapping in Africa, the Institute sent questionnaires to several African countries, in fulfilment of its role as a component of the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme network and in order to foster closer cooperation and provision of technical support among members of the network. Although communication and logistic difficulties in the Africa region have delayed receipt of the responses to the survey, alternative avenues are being worked out to overcome the difficulties encountered.

3. Survey of the research interests of member States

21. The survey of the research interests of member States revealed the concern of African countries as regards the threat of transnational organized crime and terrorism. The Institute continues to raise the awareness of countries of the region

and to receive requests on how to combat transnational organized crime and terrorism, including provision of technical assistance by the Institute in incorporating the international instruments into national legislation and enhanced cooperation at various levels among the organs of state security. Mali has benefited from such assistance and it is expected that it will be extended to Benin, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda later in 2004.

4. Workshop on effective and sustainable strategies in crime prevention

22. The workshop on effective and sustainable strategies in crime prevention was the first in a series of activities to assist the Secretary-General in encouraging member States in Africa to utilize and implement the United Nations instruments on crime prevention and criminal justice. The workshop stressed the need for advisory meetings to be held at various levels to raise the awareness and interest of countries, as well as to give them an opportunity to ensure that their concerns are ultimately reflected in the implementation of the international instruments. The Institute offers technical assistance in the incorporation of the provisions of the international instruments into local legislation and national action plans. This strategy was designed by the Institute to reach every member State, either individually or as a group at the subregional level in order to develop a culture of uniform application of international legal provisions to meet specific local and regional challenges. Following the workshop, held at the headquarters of the Institute for various partners involved in crime prevention in Uganda, arrangements are being made to organize a similar seminar in Addis Ababa, to be held during 2004, and in other countries of the region in 2005.

5. Trafficking in women and children

23. The project on trafficking in women and children was another activity intended to assist member States of the Institute in implementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and, in particular, its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (General Assembly resolution 55/25, annex II). The problem of trafficking in women and children is one of the most vicious forms of crime, controlled by a rapidly growing and highly organized criminal network that is already operating in several countries of the region with near impunity. The Institute provided technical assistance in efforts to translate the Convention into national action plans and such advisory services will be replicated in other countries. In cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Institute is exploring the possibility of carrying out a study in the region, the findings of which would be disseminated throughout the region by means of seminars or workshops. A request for technical assistance from the Democratic Republic of Congo will be responded to as soon as possible.

6. Social work in prisons

24. In cooperation with the Uganda Prison Service, the Institute developed and organized a six-week induction course for welfare and rehabilitation officers from 21 May to 1 July 2004. The contribution of the Institute concerned social work in prisons. A certificate of attendance was awarded to candidates who achieved satisfactory results on a test. This was the first in a series of specialized courses the

Institute intends to offer to its member States. Courses are being designed and discussions are under way to determine whether, funds permitting, the courses should be organized in the Institute following the renovation of the available facilities, or be held in the different countries. The latter will probably be the case for the course to be held in October 2004 for staff of the Department of Prisons of the United Republic of Tanzania, following its request for technical assistance in the area of data collection, analysis and reporting.

E. International cooperation and partnership

25. The Institute has maintained close cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. As a member of the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme network, it has continued to participate in the activities of the network. It also participated in the preparatory seminar for the *World Crime and Justice Report 2004-2005*, held in Turin, Italy, on 27 and 28 June 2003. Preparations are being made for the forthcoming meeting in Riyadh.

26. At the thirteenth session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, held in Vienna from 11 to 20 May 2004, the Institute was represented and participated in all the workshops. At the Workshop on the Rule of Law and Development, organized by the institutes of the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme network, the representative of the Institute delivered a paper on crime and development in Africa.

27. The Institute was represented at the African Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Eleventh United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, held in Addis Ababa from 1 to 3 March 2004. The Director addressed the meeting on issues pertaining to the Institute. Useful recommendations were made by delegates on opportunities available for bilateral, subregional and regional cooperation with the Institute on issues of crime prevention.

28. The Institute continued its participation in various meetings, including, in addition to those already mentioned, the following seminars and conferences at the subregional, regional and international levels: the fourth session of the Ad Hoc Committee for the Negotiation of a Convention against Corruption (Vienna, 13-21 January 2003); the session on social affairs and labour of the African Union (Mauritius, 10-15 April 2003); and the International Conference on Sustainable Safety: Municipalities at the Crossroad (Ethekwini, South Africa, 25-28 November 2003). An attendant benefit afforded by these meetings was the opportunity to explore new contacts and to consolidate existing partnerships in pursuit of joint cooperation with possible donors, including the private and civil sectors.

III. Funding and support

29. The total resources of the Institute for the biennium 2002-2003 amounted to $1,026,215.63, consisting of: (a) assessed contributions of member States ($578,123.55); (b) the United Nations grant for the biennium 2002-2003 ($380,300); and (c) other income received from rental of Institute premises and interest on deposits ($68,092.08).

30. For the period from January to June 2004, the total resources of the Institute amounted to $361,096.38, consisting of: (a) assessed contributions of member States ($25,379; received between January and June 2004); (b) the 2004 portion of the United Nations grant ($323,800; allotment received by the Economic Commission for Africa); and (c) other income received from rental of Institute premises and interest on deposits ($11,917.38).

A. Assessed financial contributions of member States

31. The Governments of Burkina Faso, the Gambia, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Nigeria, Senegal, Tunisia, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania paid their assessed contributions and arrears for the period 2002-2003, which amounted to $578,124. As at 31 December 2003, out of total assessed contributions of $3,594,766 for the period 1989-2003, only $1,011,565.35 had been received, leaving an outstanding balance of $2,583,200.65. For the period from January to June 2004, only $25,379 had been received, from the following member States: Gambia, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. Projected income from this source during the biennium 2004-2005 is $524,900.

32. During the ninth meeting of the Governing Board of the Institute, held in Kampala on 21 and 22 June 2004, concern was expressed at the high level of indebtedness of most member States. The Board directed the secretariat of the Institute to write to all those member States which had never paid any assessed contributions to ask whether they were still interested in being members of the Institute. The Governing Board requested that an external review of the Institute be undertaken to evaluate its performance in relation to the mandated objectives of its establishment. The review will examine the structure, objectives and operations of the Institute with a view to upgrading its relevance, performance and acceptability to member States.

B. United Nations grant

33. The United Nations grant to the Institute was continued in the biennium 2004-2005, increasing from $380,300 in the previous biennium (2002-2003) to $447,900 (after adjustment for inflation). This amount will cover the salaries of the five core Professional staff of the Institute (the Director, Deputy Director, Training and Human Resource Development Adviser, Administrative/Finance Officer and Information/Documentation Adviser).

C. Other sources of income

34. During the period from January 2002 to December 2003, the Institute generated income amounting to $68,092.08 from rental of its facilities. For the period from January to June 2004, only $11,917.38 has so far been received. The projected income from this source for the biennium 2004-2005 is $50,000.

IV. The future of the African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders

35. The future of the Institute depends for the most part on support from its member States. Such support will definitely encourage the major donors at the United Nations and the donor community in general, which in turn could enable the Institute to design and implement different programmes in the region.

36. While the capacity of the Institute to reach out to its member States is still limited, its future and sustainability depend to a large extent on improved contacts with and greater mobilization of its member States. Consequently, in addition to the traditional means of making the Institute and its work known, by publication of reports of seminars and workshops and participation in regional and international conferences, fact-finding, advisory and assessment missions to African capitals should also continue. In effect, such visits provide opportunities to advocate and embark on the development of specific programmes and cooperation activities with the authorities concerned at the national level. The continued support of the member States of the Institute and its success in involving other entities and agencies both within the United Nations system and outside, in particular the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Union, as well as the donor community and other partners, could make a significant contribution to strengthening the position of the Institute and could enhance the commitment of and the links with its partners in the region.

V. Strategies for sustaining the Institute

37. In its resolution 58/139, the General Assembly commended the African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders for its efforts to promote and coordinate regional technical cooperation activities related to crime prevention and criminal justice in Africa; commended the Secretary-General for his efforts to mobilize the financial resources necessary to provide the Institute with the core professional staff required to enable it to function effectively in the fulfilment of its mandated obligations; reiterated the need to strengthen further the capacity of the Institute to support national mechanisms for crime prevention and criminal justice in African countries; urged the member States of the Institute to make every possible effort to meet their obligations to the Institute and called upon all member States and non-governmental organizations to adopt concrete practical measures to support the Institute in the development of the requisite capacity to implement its programmes and activities aimed at strengthening crime prevention and criminal justice systems in Africa; and requested the Secretary-General to intensify efforts to mobilize all relevant entities of the United Nations system to provide the necessary financial and technical support to the Institute to enable it to fulfil its mandate.

38. Pursuant to resolution 58/139, special efforts have been made to collect assessed contributions from member States. Also, as recommended by the Governing Board at its eighth session, the Chairman of the Board and the Director of the Institute will continue to visit the capitals of the States of the region with a view to discussing specific modalities of cooperation and financial support.

39. The optimal utilization of available resources in conformity with the Institute's medium-term strategy and plan of action by, inter alia, organizing advisory missions to member States upon request should help to obtain the required financial and political support for the execution of agreed activities. This should also help the Institute to promote a continuing dialogue with its partners and thus encourage member States to honour their obligations and pay their assessed financial contributions on a regular basis.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

40. The concerted efforts of the Governing Board, the Institute's partners and the continued support given to the Institute by the General Assembly in various resolutions, most recently resolutions 57/172 of 2002 and 58/139, have enabled the Institute to adopt a more focused and pragmatic approach to its future development. In order to give form to the vision and mission of the Institute as set forth in its approved medium-term strategy and plan of action for the period 2002-2007, the following specific proposals are made to strengthen the Institute's capacity to fulfil its mandate:

(a) The Institute should continue to focus its substantive programme of work on specific projects and activities in areas where it has technical competence and a comparative advantage in the African region. In that connection, the Institute should focus its efforts on continuing to develop its expertise and competence related to the crime issues affecting the African region, in particular, but not exclusively, in the following areas: promotion of the rule of law, prevention and control of transnational organized crime, of corruption and of trafficking in human beings and small arms, combating terrorism, modernization of juvenile justice systems and criminal justice reform;

(b) The Institute should continue its endeavours to identify new and emerging threats to peace, security and justice in the region and should conduct awareness-raising campaigns, as required, in order to encourage the development of appropriate crime prevention measures to contribute to sustainable development;

(c) The Institute should further develop and sustain its campaign to mobilize political and material support from its member States. To that end, it should provide sufficient information to the Governments concerned, at the highest levels of civil authority, that is, heads of government and ministries of foreign affairs, of justice, of the interior and of health, in order to promote commitment to, support for and further strengthening of the programmes of the Institute;

(d) The Institute should continue to develop and implement a vigorous marketing strategy through both the electronic and the print media, to include updating of its web site. Measures designed to inform and involve the relevant public authorities, including the police and other actors in the criminal justice systems of the countries of the region, should be adopted. Efforts should also be devoted to raising awareness of the issues of crime and criminal justice dealt by the Institute through, inter alia, a special alliance with the media and the press;

(e) Through its advocacy and awareness-raising efforts, the Institute should continue to inform its member States about its technical competence and expertise and its readiness to engage in the provision of technical assistance at the national, subregional and regional levels;

(f) Member States of the Institute should be urged to meet their financial obligations so as to show their support to the Institute and thus attract additional funding from other sources.

(g) The Institute and its Governing Board should consider possible measures vis-à-vis member States of the Institute that consistently fail to meet their financial obligations and, at the same time, should explore new initiatives to deal with the long-standing arrears of assessed contributions. Such measures could include exceptional contributions designed to wipe out long-standing arrears and commitments to regular future contributions at reassessed levels and/or project- specific contributions;

(h) The close cooperation and partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and with the institutes of the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme network should be further strengthened, so that the Institute can work as a partner in the implementation by the Office of technical assistance activities in the region;

(i) The Institute and its Governing Board should consider possible areas of cooperation and synergies with the African Union, as well as with other intergovernmental, international and regional financial institutions engaged in development assistance and/or crime prevention and criminal justice activities in the region, in particular the Economic Commission for Africa, the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank. In addition, efforts to draw further support from bilateral and other donors should be maintained;

(j) The Institute should continue its advocacy efforts to encourage development agencies working in the region to incorporate crime prevention and criminal justice concerns into their development cooperation programmes in view of the threat posed by the forces of "uncivil" society to sustainable development and should explore possibilities for joint activities aimed at effective implementation of development programmes in Africa.

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Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family

Preparations for and observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present substantive report is submitted in response to General Assembly resolution 58/15 of 3 December 2003. It should be read in conjunction with the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.5/2004/3) submitted to the Commission for Social Development at its forty-second session, which provided an overview of activities undertaken at all levels in observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family.

The present report provides additional information and analysis of the situation of families worldwide, as well as approaches undertaken, primarily at the national level, in family policy and in support of families. This information may be of interest to Governments and other actors as they consider family policies and programmes in the future.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 54/124 of 17 December 1999, the General Assembly reaffirmed the importance of the observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family. The objectives have been, inter alia, to (a) strengthen the capacity of national institutions to formulate, implement and monitor policies in respect of families; (b) stimulate efforts to respond to problems affecting, and affected by, the situation of families; (c) undertake analytical reviews at all levels and assessments of the situation and needs of families; (d) strengthen the effectiveness of efforts at all levels to execute specific programmes concerning families; and (e) improve collaboration among national and international non-governmental organizations in support of families.

2. One plenary meeting of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, in 2004, will be devoted to the observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, as decided by the General Assembly in its resolution 57/164 of 18 December 2002. The meeting will build upon the events held on 15 May 2004 on the occasion of the International Day of Families.

3. The General Assembly, in its resolution 58/15 of 3 December 2003, had requested the Secretary-General to submit an interim report to the Commission for Social Development at its forty-second session and a substantive report to the Assembly at its fifty-ninth session on the implementation of that resolution and on the preparations for and the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family at all levels. In response to the request of the Assembly, the Secretary-General submitted a report to the Commission for Social Development (E/CN.5/2004/3) that contained information regarding actions and activities undertaken at all levels. The present substantive report provides additional information and analysis of the situation of families worldwide, as well as a consideration of approaches undertaken, primarily at the national level, in family policy and in support of families. This report is derived primarily from experience gained in the preparation of the tenth anniversary. Views and suggestions were also provided by a consultative meeting on mainstreaming the family issue, organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs at United Nations Headquarters from 10 to 12 December 2003. The report synthesizes the information received, indicating general priority issues and approaches for the consideration of the Assembly for the period following the tenth anniversary of the Year. After briefly considering the changing circumstances of families, the report focuses on national-level actions on behalf of families. It considers approaches to family policy, suggests the need for regular national surveys of the situation of families, and proposes actions for national coordination of family policies and programmes, as well as other national actions (legal reforms, legislation and other measures, public awareness, research, service provision and support to non-governmental organizations). After a review of the activities of the United Nations Programme on the Family, the report suggests areas for future action. This report should be read in conjunction with the aforementioned report of the Secretary-General submitted to the Commission for Social Development.

II. The changing circumstances of families

4. The family has a continuing and crucial role in social and human development as well as in provision of care and support to individuals. Strong family bonds have always been part of most societies, and families in most places continue to make important contributions to social and economic well-being. Indeed, families have major, albeit often untapped potential to contribute to national development and to the achievement of major objectives of every society and of the United Nations, including the eradication of poverty and the creation of just, stable and secure societies. Yet, the contribution of families in achieving these objectives, including the goals established in the major conferences and summits of the past decade and in the United Nations Millennium Declaration (see General Assembly resolution 55/2), has generally been overlooked.

5. Part of the reason for this may be that families themselves are experiencing tremendous change. During the 10 years following the observance of the International Year of the Family, social and economic forces have continued to have a significant impact on countries, communities and families. One of the activities of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs undertaken to mark the observance of the tenth anniversary was the publication of the study entitled *Major Trends Affecting Families*. The study considered the situation of families from a regional perspective, and focused, in particular, on a number of issues that have, and are expected to continue to have, major impacts on families in the years ahead: (a) changes in family structure; (b) migration; (c) demographic ageing and retirement; (d) the HIV/AIDS pandemic; and (e) globalization. It revealed that each of these issues is affecting families to a greater or lesser extent in virtually every country of the world. With increasing social and economic change, globalization and pressures from HIV/AIDS, migration and urbanization, families have faced increasing pressures and family structures have experienced changes. The tendency has been to have smaller families with fewer children, with a weakening of extended family relationships based on mutual obligation and shared responsibility. These changes have sometimes led to social problems as families have become less able — or willing — to provide for the needs of all their members. Many Governments attach great importance to strengthening families, focusing, among other things, on supporting family self-sufficiency, promoting a nurturing and caring environment within the family and preventing domestic violence.

III. National actions

6. The major focus for the observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family is placed at the local, national and regional levels. In preparation for the observance of the tenth anniversary, many Governments have taken a number of measures that have long-term implications for family policies and programmes. Provided below is a synthesis of the experiences of a number of Governments, as well as a consideration of approaches and good practices in family policies and programmes that may provide input into national deliberations and planning for the future.

A. Approaches to family policy

7. In the 10 years since the observance of the International Year of the Family, a great deal of attention has been given to family policies in many countries. Governments continue to recognize the family as the primary means for people to live together and to provide mutual nurturing and support. At the same time, family situations continue to change and diversify, and social disparities exist, especially in terms of structures, functions, living arrangements and living conditions. This is true within countries and between countries. Consequently, there has been a reluctance to define an international family policy, even as many countries have found it necessary to review their own policies in an effort to keep abreast of changing family lifestyles, needs and expectations. The issue of family policy remains firmly the responsibility of national and subnational Governments.

8. While seeking to strengthen families, Governments also recognize the need to promote and strengthen policies to ensure that individual family members enjoy the rights to protection that are often enshrined in national constitutions and in international conventions, so as to foster their well-being and dignity. Thus, there is a need to balance individual rights and family responsibilities. In national and international policy discourse, the notion of "strengthening the family" has sometimes led to confusion because it has often been assumed that this strengthening would come at the expense of individuals within the family. The focus of policy, however, should be to strengthen not a particular family structure, but the functioning of families, so that they can provide for their members. It is important to recognize that family remains the context in which most individuals live and the context that they themselves seek to promote. The family, even while its individual members may not live together, enjoys a sense of identity, responsibility and affiliation which is vital for social cohesion.

9. "Family policy", or policies intended to support the functioning of families, may be based on certain assumptions about the type of family that is prevalent in a country. Sometimes, policies assume a nuclear family structure, and fail to recognize the important responsibilities inherent in extended family networks and the important support they provide. Most policies once assumed the existence of a male "breadwinner" and a female "housewife" with clearly defined and distinct roles. As a result, in the past, programmes designed to provide financial assistance to families were often targeted at men, and programmes to provide support in caregiving were directed towards women. Over the years, gender-defined roles have blurred, although policies and programmes have not always kept pace. It is therefore essential that efforts be made to ensure that policies are tailored to the explicit needs of families and to the requirements of special population groups, and that they recognize and respond, in particular, to different family contexts, changing needs throughout the life course, and specific local and regional features of family life. Family policies should be reviewed periodically in order to adapt them as necessary to changes in family situations and to overall conditions in society.

10. The understanding of what constitutes family policy can be different in different countries. In general, however, it can be stated that family policies encompass overall policy measures to assist families in meeting their needs and specific measures that seek to correct dysfunctions where they exist, in order to devise, develop and implement solutions to family problems. The goals of both types of measures are to promote the well-being of the individual, family stability

and a well-balanced social system. Given the diversity of family structures and relationships, family policies should not focus on one type of family alone. Instead, they should take into account all types of family, including single-parent, compound, extended and recomposed families, and make provision for the different needs and particular circumstances of each.

11. Policies may aim to shield individuals and families from difficulty in times of temporary crisis, in order to maintain the cohesion of families during these periods and to assist families in preserving their resources. Family predicaments are not just the result of unforeseen and temporary incidents, however, nor are they solely linked to potential hazards. Family policies should therefore take into consideration the social vulnerability that differentiates certain families for what could be a lengthy period of time. In this sense, family policy is part of social policy.

12. The articulation of social and family-oriented policies and programmes remains a complex matter. Besides policies designed specifically to support families, all countries have a range of social policies, many focused on the needs of individuals, that also have an impact on the families in which those individuals live. Most existing social policies and programmes focus on individuals, often simultaneously, with few adjustments made in design and implementation to account for the diversity of family structures, internal dynamics and local cultures. Programmes and measures in areas such as employment, housing, education, health and transport should be evaluated not only in terms of how they affect individuals, but also on the basis of their likely contribution to resolving family difficulties or whether they promote family stability, ensure a family's ability to adapt or respond effectively to its environment, or reduce disparities in the benefits provided to families in terms of insurance, taxation, services, education or training.

13. There is growing awareness that a more comprehensive approach should be taken, and technical and political criteria applied to harmonize actions on behalf of the family. It is therefore important for Governments to develop an integrated family policy that effectively and visibly complements existing sectoral policies and attempts to meet the needs of individuals while recognizing that they are also members of families. There may be times when the policies of different social sectors overlap or, worse, conflict. The family dimension should be taken into account in all aspects of policy, and efforts made to ensure that sectoral policies complement those that deal directly with the family and its specific needs. It is important to establish an integrated family policy that overcomes the difficulties of coordinating different social administrations and departments.

14. In addition to social policies, there are policies affecting families that are developed and implemented by a range of governmental and non-governmental institutions, many of which are not social institutions. They may be economic, fiscal, environmental or infrastructure policies. The effects of these policies on families may be unintentional, or they may be invisible to the institutions responsible for implementing them. These policies may be considered to be "indirect family policies". In order to strengthen the functioning of families, Governments should examine the impact on families of both direct and indirect policies, and evaluate all aspects of their effect on families. This will help to ensure that increased consideration is given to supporting families when policy objectives are determined and when the results of policies are evaluated.

15. Responsibility for developing family policy and considering the impact of other policies on families remains with national Governments, but Governments will likely wish to work closely with civil society, the private sector and all other concerned actors in developing and implementing family policy frameworks. Local authorities and groups should take part in drafting and evaluating the family policy, in implementing the policy measures and in adapting them to regional and local requirements. Such an approach would enable all concerned to respond more adequately to evolving family needs and circumstances.

B. Surveying the situation of families

16. In order to improve their understanding of the situation of families in their countries, a number of Governments have undertaken national family surveys. The information obtained has helped them to understand the diversity of family structures and the variety of conditions in which families function. The goal is to obtain information necessary to improve policy and the effectiveness of programmes to support families. Some objectives of the survey might be: (a) to systematically organize existing information on families; (b) to describe the legal framework relating to the family at the national level; (c) to describe the framework of public policy on the family at the national level; (d) to generate information that will allow for better decision-making, taking families into account; (e) to provide baseline information that will enable the Government to identify changes over time; (f) to express the Government's commitment to integrating a family perspective in policies and programmes; (g) to direct actions to help families stay together and prevent family disintegration; and (h) to provide input to research on family issues.

17. When undertaking family surveys, Governments may wish to consider a number of factors. Surveys should aim to identify the different types of family living arrangements, or family types, that exist in the country. They should seek to obtain a broad view of family issues, how families respond or cope with their situations, whether they are informed of governmental family policies and programmes, whether they utilize the governmental and non-governmental programmes that are available, and whether they are satisfied with the services they receive.

18. A survey on family conditions would provide a comprehensive view of the current situation of families, whether that situation has improved or deteriorated as a result of internal or external pressures, and how families have responded or adapted to these trends. Among the additional issues that may be of interest in a survey are: (a) how families themselves perceive or define the concept of "family"; (b) how different generations perceive family life, and how much time and effort they invest in it; (c) how families balance productive work and family responsibilities; (d) how family responsibilities are divided among family members, and particularly between men and women; (e) how much time parents spend in caring for, teaching and nurturing their children; (f) the impact of the media on family life; (g) what support, if any, is obtained from other (extended) family members; and (h) what social or community services are relied upon. There are, of course, other issues and questions that Governments will consider on the basis of their own national cultures and traditions.

19. The aim of a survey is to obtain the views of the relevant stakeholders about the impact of social and economic changes on families and about the priorities

Governments should adopt in developing or revising family policies and programmes in the face of changing family contexts. This type of information will provide both national and local authorities with a basis for policy formulation or revision, and improve strategic planning. As they contribute to the monitoring of family policies, surveys should be conducted periodically, as deemed necessary.

C. National coordination

20. A pivotal lesson emanating from the International Year of the Family is the need for a declaration of political will and commitment, followed by the creation, or reinforcement, of capacities and mechanisms for intersectoral consultation and coordination. Family concerns are cross-cutting and multisectoral: they often cannot be addressed adequately by a single sectoral ministry. It is suggested that a national coordinating body be established, consisting of representatives of public and civil institutions concerned with family matters. This mechanism could evolve from similar bodies that were established to prepare for and celebrate the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, but its responsibilities would go beyond provision of information and raising of awareness of issues to focusing specifically on policy development and implementation. The coordinating mechanism could be a consultative body that plans, develops and implements family policies and programmes; or, rather than develop policy directly, it could oversee the process of policy development.

21. The coordinating mechanism can take different forms according to political and administrative traditions and preferences. It could be either a single body or an organized system of entities under different authorities. The overall objectives of the national coordination mechanism would be to promote family policies and programmes and to achieve a coordinated and integrated approach to incorporating family issues into other policies and programmes in order to derive maximum benefit from available resources. All the ministries or departments that generate policies that directly or indirectly affect families should be represented.

22. Among the functions of a national coordinating mechanism would be: (a) to sensitize public opinion on family-related issues and problems; (b) to undertake periodic reviews and assessments of the situation of families, identifying specific issues and problems; (c) to promote and undertake research; (d) to coordinate, monitor and evaluate family policies and programmes; (e) to recommend changes, amendments or revisions to existing policies and to suggest new policies; (f) to promote complementarity among the policies and programmes of different public and private institutions concerned with family issues; (g) to encourage joint planning, organization and execution of programmes and activities; (h) to mobilize resources from public and private sectors; and (i) to facilitate channels of communication with civil society. In order to undertake these tasks, the mechanism must possess significant influence and high public visibility.

23. Efforts should be made to ensure that the voices of families, as expressed directly or by their representatives, are recognized by governmental and social institutions, and a national coordinating mechanism may serve to ensure this. Family members should have access to a person or an office that can respond to their problems and concerns, and can speak on their behalf on matters of larger social, cultural and political concern. Similarly, service providers may experience practical

problems in organizing and delivering services, and may require assistance in resolving them. It is unlikely that individuals will have direct access to a national mechanism, but the national coordinating mechanism can oversee a system of local ombudsmen or something similar. An ombudsman may be a locally recognized person and the office may be a village- or municipal-level administrative unit.

24. The views and concerns of families may also be channelled through organizations and associations, and Governments may consider providing support for the development or strengthening of family associations at the local, regional and national levels. Governmental assistance and support for these organizations may take many forms, including the provision of financial support, administrative assistance, organizational back-up and meeting space. Family-related non-governmental organizations may wish to establish their own mechanism of coordination, to improve mutual cooperation and improve the efficiency of their activities. This mechanism would also contribute to, or form part of, a national coordinating mechanism.

25. A national coordinating mechanism may also serve as a policy think tank to review, monitor, explore and propose policies and legislation of concern to families. It may prepare a systematic description of all governmental actions relating to the family. It may undertake or oversee the type of national survey described earlier.

26. A coordinating mechanism may act as the primary national body advocating on behalf of the family. While Governments may seek to "mainstream" or integrate a family perspective in various policies implemented by different ministries, they should also recognize the continuing need for family advocacy, and for an office or mechanism that has responsibility for family advocacy. Governments may develop a two-tier strategy combining integration with advocacy. Integration would be carried out in the sectoral ministries and offices, but those responsible for integrating a family perspective in those ministries may require advice and assistance. A national coordination mechanism can provide them with expertise and appropriate technical support on family issues.

D. Other national actions

1. Legal reforms

27. During the past 10 years, encouraged by resolutions and recommendations of the General Assembly, a number of countries have reviewed their constitutions and legal systems regarding issues relating to families, children, adolescents and youth, older persons and persons with disabilities. In accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Assembly resolution 44/25, annex), for example, some countries have developed new codes on childhood and adolescence. These codes generally recognize the family as the natural and primary environment in which children grow and develop, and assign to the State the primary responsibility for designing and implementing policies, plans and programmes to help families meet their responsibilities. In accordance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Assembly resolution 34/180, annex), Governments have undertaken reviews of family codes from a gender perspective and made substantial revisions in order to protect the rights of girls and women. Governments that have ratified international conventions should ensure that legal codes conform with international standards.

2. Legislation and other measures

28. Significant progress has also been made in the sphere of legislation to improve the living conditions and strengthen the social security and stability of families, particularly families with children. Many countries have enacted or considered new laws that directly benefit families. The laws and bills show that there is special interest in strengthening parent-child relations, dealing with conjugal and family disputes, helping people balance work and family responsibilities, protecting mothers and promoting measures related to the health and well-being of family members.

29. As a result of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up, both central and local Governments have established policies, programmes or services that target families as beneficiaries, either directly or indirectly. A main objective is to allocate adequate financial benefits to families to help them meet more readily the expenses associated with caring for family members. Reviews and revisions of taxation policies have helped families in this regard.

30. To ensure that policies and programmes are actually implemented, some Governments have elaborated programme implementation guidelines, which provide useful information and assistance to those authorities responsible for implementation. This helps to ensure that policies do not simply remain on paper but are implemented through appropriate programmes.

31. There is now an awareness of the need for action by public and private agencies to disseminate information, expand coverage and coordinate initiatives to address the problems and needs of people within the context of their families. This awareness will lead to continuing legislative action in the years ahead.

3. Public awareness

32. One of the major objectives of the observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family has been to revitalize public attention directed towards the family and to renew support for family policies and programmes. This revitalized attention and renewed support should be maintained and extended through an ongoing public awareness campaign and efforts to turn awareness into action.

33. To maintain awareness, a communications strategy may be developed and implemented within the framework of the national family policy and programmes. The strategy adopted would reflect national priorities. It should inform the public about the legislation, policies and programmes that exist to benefit families and inform families about how to access the services and benefits that are available to them. As with any strategy, an information strategy would be implemented over a number of years. Information may need to be provided repeatedly over time in order to be received and understood by a wide range of individuals, families and groups.

34. Within the communications strategy, programmes can be designed to disseminate information through the mass media in order to increase awareness of relevant issues. Documents, publications, articles, brochures, posters and any other form of printed information can reach a large audience and provide valuable information on the issues related to family policy. Alternatives to printed materials should also be developed in order to reach people who may be illiterate. New

technologies, including both information and communication technologies, offer expanded possibilities for increasing public awareness. Entertainment media can provide an excellent means for reaching people and should not be overlooked in the communications strategy.

35. Existing institutions, including schools and health clinics, stores, recreation facilities or any other venues where people congregate, provide an additional means for reaching people, and effective utilization of such institutions should be considered in the communications strategy.

36. The strategy should seek to reach all family members, and special messages may need to be developed to reach particular age groups. Information and awareness-raising campaigns and activities to inform children and young people about family issues and family policies may be organized through childcare centres and in schools. Information should be presented in ways that are relevant and responsive to children and youth. These activities can draw on resource persons specialized in the areas of education, law, psychology, sociology and health. They should also emphasize participation of children and youth as active contributors who can spread information and reach out to their communities, and not simply as passive recipients.

37. Meetings could be organized among governmental authorities, families and family or other associations at the local level in order to encourage interaction between governmental and non-governmental entities, to allow authorities to provide information and offer guidance, and to create opportunities for them to hear the concerns of local populations.

38. In its resolutions on the observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, the General Assembly has repeatedly called for the exchange of experiences and information among Governments. This exchange takes place at the regional level through the regional commissions, and at the international level in the annual sessions of the Commission for Social Development.

4. Research

39. In addition to the family surveys described earlier, there is a need for continuing in-depth research on the family, its functions, relationships and dynamics. This research would support policy adjustments or new policy development, and would form a foundation for the implementation of national action plans for the family. Research can provide additional and relevant local, national and subregional evidence and information to inform policies and programmes. Studies can provide qualitative information to complement statistical and other information. They can also offer families, particularly socially excluded families, an opportunity to articulate their conditions and needs first-hand. Participatory forms of research are an important means to increase popular participation in the design, implementation and evaluation of local family-related programmes and policies.

40. Governments interested in supporting research on family issues might wish to work with interested parties, particularly the academic community and non-governmental organizations, to design a plan to guide family research. The plan could promote integration of the work of universities, study centres and non-governmental organizations, where such integration is desirable and useful. Support for research on family issues can be sought from a variety of sources,

including the United Nations Trust Fund on Family Activities. The findings of research studies on families may be published or otherwise disseminated to provide useful information and guidance on these matters to policy makers, government authorities, service providers and families.

5. Service provision

41. Social services generally include provision of education and training, medical care, reproductive health services, social welfare services and labour-market services. Many services are designed to meet the specific needs of individual family members without giving due attention to the family context. Social services should treat the family as a fundamental partner in the provision of support for those family members who need care. When problems exist that a family cannot address by itself, the State and the social sectors must intervene, but they should focus their efforts on strengthening the family's own independence and minimizing its dependency on external services. Effective services would help families to retain and strengthen their caregiving functions and strengthen the capacity of families and communities to cope.

42. Many countries provide some kind of financial support to families, generally in the form of direct payments, entitlements to special services or tax benefits. These benefits acknowledge the expense involved in raising a family and the difficulties many families face in reconciling work and family responsibilities. Governments may consider increasing family allowances, taking into account family income and applying principles of fairness; awarding a child benefit to families; and including adopted children among the children who benefit from family allowances.

43. Research has shown that, in the vast majority of cases, caregiving that takes place in all societies is provided through family networks. Usually this caregiving is provided by women and girls, who may have to sacrifice other goals, including education and productive employment, in order to provide care to family members who need it. Recently, new focus has been placed on men as fathers and as partners in caring for families. Programmes that attempt to overcome gender stereotyping and encourage men to take greater responsibility and participate more actively within the family and the community have been initiated. The effect is not only to empower women, but also to enhance the overall quality of life of the family.

44. Governments can acknowledge and encourage the caregiving and nurturing that are provided in families. A first step is to recognize that family caregiving constitutes a substantial contribution to society. A second step is to assist men and women in balancing productive work and family responsibilities. Governments may also reward caregivers through programmes that provide benefits to people caring for family members at home, or offer them some form of small payment or credits to be used for purchases. Governments can also promote community-based efforts to support family caregivers. Some non-governmental and community-based organizations provide back-up support to family caregivers, offering them the information, training, guidance, assistance and respite that help them meet the need for care.

45. This approach to supporting family caregivers recognizes the strengths of local communities, which include solidarity and traditional forms of knowledge in addition to professional skills and information that are useful to family caregivers. Solidarity and mutual support, which are important forms of social capital, are

enhanced through the collaboration of different community members. In this way, family resources can be optimized, burdens can be shared, opportunities can be enhanced, and participation and responsibility of the community and its families can be increased.

46. The development of services to provide comprehensive support to families living in poverty, including, where possible, guaranteed minimum benefits for the poorest families, is particularly important. Such services may help families that are vulnerable to external economic pressures to remain together. It is important for service providers to bear in mind, however, that poor families are not homogeneous and that there are many dimensions to poverty that require nuanced policy responses and tailored programmes, taking into account the special situation of each family member. However, programmes tailored to the needs and situations of particular families, groups, communities or regions should nevertheless be integrated into an overall coherent and coordinated system of public benefits for families.

47. Simply offering services may not be sufficient, particularly to families who are poor, isolated or vulnerable. Many of these families may not be aware that services exist that can help them, or they may not know how to access those services. They may be reluctant to use services, because they have to pay a fee, or fear stigmatization. They may not have the time or the transport required to reach the site at which the service is provided. In order to ensure that services are available to the families who need them, service providers must reach out, providing appropriate information and support to those families to help them access those services.

48. One approach to ensuring that services reach families who need them is to compile and maintain a directory of information and services, including rights and entitlements, to facilitate families' access to these resources. Such a "family guide" could be compiled to provide families with information about administrative offices and associations offering services to families, as well as about the procedures to be followed to obtain services and the applicable costs.

49. Another approach is to develop incentive mechanisms tied to service provision. For example, families may be encouraged to send children to school if the school offers a meal, or if there is a means of replacing the income those children might otherwise have provided to the family. Access to services can be enhanced through the establishment of one-stop family service and training centres. Such centres provide a number of services under one roof, thus simplifying procedures and reducing the time and effort spent in obtaining services.

50. One area where community support can be particularly important in helping families access services is that encompassing the development of awareness and knowledge. Community-based efforts to combat illiteracy among different age groups, with particular emphasis on women and inhabitants of rural areas, can help the members of those groups access services.

51. Innovative forms of social service provision can benefit more than the individual and the family, and extend to the community as well. In one country, an intersectoral employment programme seeks to greatly improve living conditions for families by helping unemployed workers re-enter the labour market by providing training. At the same time, it supports jobs in productive projects that benefit the community.

52. In addition to social services available to all individuals, such as education and health care, specific family services may also be provided. These services are directed at supporting adoption and child development, improving family welfare, providing counselling and intervening in instances of violence or abuse, and are traditionally provided by social workers and assistants, as well as by teachers and nurses, and any other professionals involved in work relating to the family. They aim to provide families with social and psychological support and to help families settle unresolved problems and cope during periods of stress or adjustment.

53. Domestic violence of any sort, but particularly violence against women and girls, is now generally regarded as a social problem and as a threat to family cohesion, as well as a violation of human dignity. It should therefore be included under the umbrella of social support, in addition to which counselling and support centres for victims of marital violence should be established, along with shelters, where necessary. Parental education programmes, designed to provide new parents with information and parenting skills, have proved successful in some places.

6. Support to non-governmental organizations

54. Many of the services offered to families are provided by non-governmental or community organizations and associations. Governments have recognized the vital contributions to family well-being that are made by family associations and non-governmental organizations, and have increasingly utilized these organizations to channel resources to families and communities. Sometimes, however, these organizations require strengthening to be able to deliver services. Governments may consider providing not only financial resources but also technical support to these non-governmental organizations. One approach that has been shown to be successful is the partnering of government with community organizations. Governments may second personnel from ministries and directorates on a full- or part-time basis to work in organizations to increase their capacities, knowledge and administrative skills.

55. Governments may also encourage the exchange of experiences and expertise among non-governmental organizations by creating opportunities for them to come together in seminars, conferences or round tables. They can encourage joint programming and partnerships to improve efficiency and effectiveness of programmes.

IV. Support from the United Nations Programme on the Family

56. In its resolution 57/164, the General Assembly decided that the major activities for the observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family should be concentrated at the local, national and regional levels and that the United Nations system should assist Governments in these efforts. The United Nations Programme on the Family of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat has undertaken or supported a range of activities to observe the tenth anniversary encompassing:

(a) Launch of the anniversary: on 4 December 2003, the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs delivered the statement of the Secretary-General; several non-governmental organizations also organized events on this day;

(b) Expert Group Meeting on Mainstreaming the Family Issue, 10-12 December 2003: the meeting brought together experts from all world regions to discuss how mainstreaming should put families at the heart of the policy-making process. It also explored how to incorporate a "mainstreaming strategy" within the work programme of the Division for Social Policy and Development. The Meeting provided an opportunity to exchange knowledge on approaches and problems related to the mainstreaming process with respect to family issues, and developed recommendations on strengthening capacities for effective planning and coordination of family-related activities;

(c) A global study on trends affecting families, with chapters covering the situation of families in all world regions, which was published and disseminated. The study examines critical issues affecting all families: demographic changes; changes in family structure; issues related to migration; the HIV/AIDS pandemic; and globalization;

(d) A study on the impact of HIV/AIDS on families, which is being edited. It will be published and disseminated in late 2004;

(e) A Policy Workshop on HIV/AIDS and Family Well-being, which was convened from 28 to 30 January 2004 in Windhoek, Namibia. The objectives of the workshop were to explore the effects of HIV/AIDS on the family unit and family networks, including changing generational roles and related social integration issues; identify coping mechanisms at different societal levels to mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS on the family; review existing policies and programmes to determine how they respond to the needs of families affected by HIV/AIDS at different stages of impact; develop a policy framework and recommendations for addressing family issues and changing inter-generational roles in HIV/AIDS policies and strategies; and identify further capacity-building needs and knowledge gaps for follow-up activities. The final report and recommendations of the workshop are available on the web site of the United Nations Programme on the Family (www.un.org/esa/socdev/family) and will be published in late 2004;

(f) A technical publication entitled *Family Indicators*,[1] which was completed and issued in all official languages;

(g) The International Day of Families (15 May), which was observed at United Nations Headquarters on 13 May 2004 under the theme "The observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family". The Department of Public Information/NGO Section worked with the United Nations Programme on the Family to organize a seminar on the theme. The New York NGO Committee on the Family and the IYF +10 Committee also organized panel discussions;

(h) The United Nations Trust Fund on Family Activities, which provided support for a number of conferences and publications. The Fund contributed to a regional meeting on the family, organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, and to an African regional meeting organized by the Government of Benin. In the context of International Youth Day, it linked young people and families through support for the organization of panel discussions on inter-generational issues at the World Youth Festival held in Barcelona, Spain. The fund also supported the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family in publishing a report entitled *Documenting Contributions of Civil Society Organizations to the Well-being*

[1] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.IV.4.

of Families, on the establishment of its interactive Internet forum and database of family organizations, and it enabled the publication of a report by the International Movement ATD Fourth World entitled *How Poverty Separates Parents and Children*.

57. These activities provide important information for Governments to utilize in planning and implementing family policies, programmes and activities in the future. They also created opportunities for governmental and non-governmental representatives, experts and all interested actors to exchange experiences and good practices.

V. Suggestions and recommendations

58. This report has provided a substantive review of issues concerning family policy and programmes, based on experiences gained during the preparation and observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family. This review may provide guidance to Governments as they further develop national policies, programmes and plans of action on the family. In considering further action on the family in follow-up to the tenth anniversary, the General Assembly may wish to consider the following recommendations:

(a) To integrate family issues in national development policies and programmes, Governments may wish to establish three institutional pillars: first, a national commitment at the highest level of government, preferably in the form of a declaration, or proclamation, by the head of State; second, an effective national coordinating mechanism; and, third, appropriate family support legislation and social services that take into account the country's cultural, environmental, social and economic conditions;

(b) Governments should maintain partnership with concerned organizations of civil society (including non-governmental organizations, academia, professional societies and institutions, trade unions, employers' federations, chambers of commerce and industry, the legal and medical professions, and other stakeholders), especially through their participation in national coordination mechanisms;

(c) As the United Nations has a catalytic and supportive role in strengthening and enhancing concern for the family at the national, regional and global levels, this role can best be exercised by assisting in integrating family perspectives in the development process and by supporting national action. The General Assembly may wish to encourage the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to provide technical assistance to national coordination mechanisms; support diagnostic studies, research and data collection; exchange expertise and experiences on family issues; disseminate information; support networking at subregional, regional and interregional levels; and encourage policy and programme coordination within the United Nations system, and with other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. The United Nations Programme on the Family should highlight advocacy, capacity-building and technical support to Governments, at their request, on the issue of the family.